



Article History
Received: 2026.06.11
Accepted: 2026.07.23
Published: 2026.08.20

Issue no: 01 | Vol no: 06 | August 2026: 31-39

Centralised Authority and Religious Exclusivity: A Theological Critique of Jehovah's Witnesses' Self-Understanding as the True Church

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Cite this article in APA

Kitur, J. K. (2026). Centralised authority and religious exclusivity: A theological critique of Jehovah's Witnesses' self-understanding as the true church. *Editon consortium journal of philosophy, religion and theological studies*, 6(1), 31–39. <https://doi.org/10.51317/ecjprts.v6i1.666>

Abstract

This study critiques the theological perspective of Jehovah's Witnesses (JW), which shapes their self-understanding as the only true church, with a primary focus on the centralised authority that promotes religious exclusivity. The study employs a qualitative critical review design based on documentary and textual analysis of historical, doctrinal, sociological, and theological literature, including peer-reviewed scholarship, relevant JW publications, and biblical texts. The literature was thematically and comparatively assessed to trace the origins of JW in the 1870s Bible Student movement led by Charles Taze Russell, its officialisation in 1931, and the development of claims associated with the restoration of first-century Christianity and the distinction of JW from other religious traditions. The analysis considers mechanisms associated with exclusivity, including doctrinal modifications (new light), avoidance behaviours, the New World Translation, centralised interpretive authority, and the psychosocial implications reported in scholarship on former members. Comparative perspectives situate JW within restorationist traditions and examine the distinctive interplay among restorationist identity, centralised authority, and social enforcement. The article further evaluates these developments in relation to biblical ecclesiology, particularly the New Testament understanding of the church as a universal community of believers (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28). The article suggests balanced criticism of JW sincerity and criticises the dangers of isolation, hermeneutical dislocation of the human mind and mediation of human authority. The implications of interfaith dialogue and ethical religious practice are considered, along with suggestions for future interdisciplinary research. This study offers an integrated theological, historical, and sociological interpretation of JW exclusivity by synthesising doctrinal development, authority structures, social practices, and ecclesiological perspectives.

Key words: Biblical ecclesiology, centralised authority, Jehovah's Witnesses, religious exclusivity, restorationism.



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INTRODUCTION

The issue of religious exclusivity, particularly the one that is fostered by the perception that only one religion provides an entry point to the truth about God, and that all other traditions are invalid, is an ancient bane of theological debate. This often leads to inter-religious disputes and academic ridicule. With Jehovah's Witnesses (JW), such exclusivity manifests as a dogma claiming they are the sole true practitioners of Christianity - a position asserting that a single religious perspective possesses uniquely valid truth while all conflicting perspectives are false. In this study, religious exclusivity refers to the position that a single religious perspective possesses uniquely valid truth, while conflicting religious perspectives are regarded as false or invalid.

JW first appeared in the late-19th-century United States as an extension of the Bible Student movement created by Charles Taze Russell in the 1870s, whose initial emphasis was on millennialist prophecies and literal interpretation of the Bible (Ripley, 1995). Under the successor to Russell, Joseph Franklin Rutherford, the group recognised itself in 1931 as Jehovah's Witnesses, with an emphasis on restoring first-century apostolic practices and rejection of mainstream Christianity, which it terms Christendom (Knox, 2011, 2017). This historical development is also documented in scholarly historiography of the movement.

This historical direction highlights a sense of self-identity as a divinely restored being, with the most important event in this regard being the so-called divine endorsement of 1919, which transformed the history of the JW, serving as a turning point when, based on the teachings of JW, Jehovah discerned true worship and apostate systems. The dogma of JW is centred on the belief that they represent the only true religion, as expressed in the official materials, which refer to the use of the metaphor of the narrow road to life (Matthew 7:14). Only a few people can find that path to salvation, dismissing the pluralistic ideas of many true religions. This ideology depicts other religions as deceiving constructions by Satan, equated to Babylon the Great in Revelation 17, and will be punished by God. The 1919 claim is treated in this review as part of JW's institutional and theological self-understanding rather than as an independently established divine event.

The situation of the JWs in the context of the American 19th-century restorationist environment sheds light on the escalation of their exclusivity. The restorationist movements typically sought to evade centuries of perceived accretions of dogma by returning to scriptural primitivism, usually stressing biblical authority over creedal traditions. However, even though a great number of such groups retained some degree of separatism, JW ideology changed to be more rigidly dichotomous: their organisation is the only place of restored truth, and all other people, including fellow restorationists, are still immersed in Satanic delusion. This intensification is not only a historical condition but also a theological process in which organisational identity is made coincident with divine favour, rendering it incompatible with fidelity. This kind of framework maintains cohesion within, creating boundaries that are easy to follow while also increasing exposure to insularity criticism.

The principles that abide by the Bible as interpreted by the Governing Body, a centralised leadership perceived as faithful and offering exclusive spiritual guidance, have been a source of support (Maranatha Community, 2012). Other doctrines, including the New World Translation, which was the sole undisfigured scripture, political neutrality, and tendencies such as door-to-door evangelism, also add to this uniqueness, creating a feeling of isolation from worldly institutions (John 17:14-16). These aspects not only preserve internal unity but also indicate divine favour, and the JW literature focuses on historical continuity between biblical figures, such as Abel, and the modern organisation.

Matthew 7:15-20 illuminates false and true prophets. The verse refers to a deception of believers by a false prophet who appears to be a sheep but is, in fact, a ferocious wolf. The verse also expounds this with the use of good and bad trees:

“Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 7:17-18, NIV).

Jehovah's Witnesses consider themselves to be the only true religion, while all other religious movements are labelled false religions. In their view, all others have failed; they are the 'fine fruits' to be “cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 7:15-20). According to

Jehovah's Witnesses, the true vine Christ referred to in this review is the Witnesses, and the branches cut off and ready to be thrown into the fire are all other denominations except the Witnesses. In this instance, on their part, any religious system is a religious structure of Satan, all seemingly being holy on the surface but not their own (Jehovah's Witnesses). The Jehovah's Witnesses also refer to the postulation that Satan has seduced all religions, and they have thus become the religious systems of Satan.

Although these principles offer JW followers a strong framework for identity and purpose, they are open to critical analysis from theological, sociological, and historical standpoints. Scholars have suggested that this exclusiveness is often based on authoritarian forms of leadership, in which leaders can claim infallibility in hermeneutics and perhaps override individual hermeneutics, resulting in doctrinal insularity (Maranatha Community, 2012; Nixon, 2024). Critiques also indicate inconsistencies. Some of these include eschatological prophecies that failed, shunning practices, which may contribute to high-control perceptions, and a contrast with the New Testament focus on the unity of the ecclesia (e.g., Ephesians 4:4-6; Galatians 3:28).

To sharpen the analytical focus, the review is guided by three questions: How has centralised authority contributed to the construction and maintenance of JW religious exclusivity? How do doctrinal adjustments, avoidance practices, and restorationist identity reinforce or complicate the claim to exclusive truth? What theological and ethical implications emerge when these practices are considered in relation to biblical ecclesiology and the psychosocial experiences reported in existing scholarship?

Therefore, this study critically evaluates the sources and mechanisms of JW exclusivity, examines the principles that drive this belief, and assesses its theological implications within the broader context of biblical ecclesiology, ultimately promoting a moderate view that recognises JW sincerity while raising concerns about the dangers of isolation and mediation through human authority.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The article adopts a qualitative critical review design. This research design is appropriate because the study not only aims to summarise existing literature but also to

identify, compare, interpret, and critically assess the arguments and evidence relevant to JW religious exclusivity. Therefore, the study brings together historical, doctrinal, sociological, psychological, and theological sources rather than treating any single source tradition as sufficient.

Data sources comprised three broad categories: scholarly literature on the history, organisation, doctrines, social practices, and psychosocial experiences associated with Jehovah's Witnesses; JW publications used primarily to establish the organisation's own doctrinal and institutional self-understanding; and selected biblical texts used in the article's ecclesiological analysis. Peer-reviewed studies and scholarly books were also prioritised for critical interpretation, while official JW materials were retained as primary documentary sources for describing internal claims and practices.

Additionally, documentary and textual analysis was used to examine the selected sources. The material was organised thematically around religious exclusivity, centralised authority, doctrinal adjustment and unfulfilled expectations, shunning and social enforcement, restorationist comparison, psychosocial identity, and biblical ecclesiology. Within each theme, claims from primary organisational sources were compared with relevant secondary scholarship. A comparative theological approach was then used to place JW claims alongside the New Testament understanding of the church as a body of believers. The analysis was interpretive and argumentative rather than statistical, and no human participants or primary field data were involved.

To enhance analytical balance, the review distinguishes between describing JW self-understanding and evaluating that self-understanding from historical, sociological, psychological, and biblical-ecclesiological perspectives. This approach makes it possible to recognise areas of continuity and tension across the literature while avoiding the assumption that organisational claims and external scholarly interpretations carry the same evidentiary status.

METHODOLOGY

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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The historical account outlined in the Introduction is used here as analytical context rather than as an end in itself. The significance of the movement's origins lies in the way restorationist claims became connected to organisational identity, authority, and the subsequent

construction of religious exclusivity. The modern history of Jehovah's Witnesses began with the formation of a Bible study group in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., in the early 1870s. At first, they were known only as Bible Students, but in 1931, they adopted the Scriptural name Jehovah's Witnesses. Their beliefs and practices are not new but are a restoration of first-century Christianity (Bible, 1989). According to the Watch Tower and Tract Society (2004), JWs align themselves with Bible heroes of faith (Abel, Abraham, Moses, and Christ, the 'foremost witness of Jehovah'). From Christ and the New Testament Church, they positioned their Church to the 1870s Bible Study Students led by Charles Taze Russell. Any religious history that does not match their opinion is considered to be Christendom.

The Judaism of the Jehovah's Witnesses, as the exclusive truth that gives members a purpose and a sense of belonging, should be subject to further critical analysis alongside the underlying dynamics of hermeneutics and leadership. This part examines other aspects of this exclusivity, such as how modifications to doctrine, enforcement systems, relative placement within restorationist traditions, and psychosocial implications have strengthened it. In this respect, the discussion moves from historical description to an examination of how exclusivity is sustained through doctrine, organisational authority, social enforcement, and identity formation.

Doctrinal Adjustments and Unfulfilled Expectations: Implications for Exclusive Claims

Posing as "an angel of light," Satan, the Devil, has misled millions into following his teachings rather than God's (2 Corinthians 11:14). The Apostle John showed that Satan's influence is so extensive that "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). John knew that Satan was "misleading the entire inhabited earth" (Revelation 12:9).

History, however, shows that not everyone has been deceived. Even in the darkest of times, notes Melvyn Bragg, "many fine souls did good when most around them are evil." In recent times, Jehovah's Witnesses have been noted for their positive influence. To keep free from any taint of false religion, they have based their beliefs and actions solely on God's inspired Word, the Bible (2nd Timothy 3:16,17). Moreover, like first-century Christians, they have followed Jesus' command to be "no

part of their world” (John 15:17-19, 17:14-16) (Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 2004).

They not only condemn the religions of others but also the entire Bible, except for their own translation (the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures). The Watchtower believes that Bible translations excluding theirs are:

“... Made by clergymen and missionaries of Christendom’s religious sects, and to a varying degree, their translation was influenced by the pagan philosophies and unscriptural traditions that their religious systems had inherited from the past. Furthermore, older and more reliable Bible manuscripts were becoming available... Jehovah’s Witnesses wanted a translation that embodied the benefits of the latest Scholarship, one that was not coloured by the creeds and traditions of Christendom. This literal translation faithfully presents the original text, ensuring clarity and understandability for modern-day readers. The New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures, released in 1950, filled that need” (Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, 2022).

They believe that all Bible translations, whether from the Hebrew or Greek Bibles, have been distorted by translators through human creeds and traditions, pagan beliefs and philosophies, making them ‘unclear’ except for the New World Translation (NWT). Therefore, these translations are, in their view, the work of unschooled lay clergy members and Missionaries. In their literature, the Witnesses describe the spiritual condition of all non-Witnesses as detestable.

Christendom’s spiritual condition, in this sense, fits what the apostle Paul wrote: “They publicly declare they know God, but they disown him by their works, because they are detestable and disobedient and not approved for good work of any sort” (Titus 1:16). In this way, Trinitarian Christendom will thus be called to account and be judged adversely for its God-dishonoring actions and doctrines.

In their opinion, JW Witnesses consider their religion to be as old as humanity. They regard Abel as the father of their religion. Their justification reads;

According to the Bible, the line of witnesses of Jehovah reaches back to faithful Abel. Hebrews 11:4-12:1 says:

“By faith Abel offered God a sacrifice of greater worth than Cain... By faith Noah, after being given divine warning of things not yet beheld, showed godly fear... By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed ... By faith Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh, choosing to be ill-treated with the people of God rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin.”

The Bible cites Jesus Christ as saying: “This is what the Amen says: the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation by God.” Of whom was he a witness? He himself claimed that he made his Father's name known. He was the foremost witness of Jehovah (Rev. 3:14; John 17:6).

The Jehovah’s Witnesses present themselves as something directed by Jehovah, with the Governing Body serving as the medium for the progressive interpretation of scripture. Nevertheless, the adaptations of historical times to central teachings, more commonly known as new light, call into question the dependability of the foundations of the assertion of exclusive truth. Much can be found in reinterpretations of eschatological timelines, including the visible presence of Christ changing from 1874 to 1914 and 1925 (the resurrection of the old faithful) and 1975 (the possible beginning of Armageddon), which created a lot of anticipation but did not become a reality as first put forward (Penton, 1997). These developments have been examined in broader historical scholarship on JW doctrine and institutional authority.

The new light paradigm has a twofold role in JW theology: it allows for interpretive evolution while maintaining the assertion of elusive divine guidance. The doctrine defends centralised authority against the accusation of fallibility by presenting adjustments as a step in the right direction rather than a correction of inaccuracy. Followers are therefore conditioned to perceive doctrinal change as a sign of Godly direction and not human inability to comprehend, and to strengthen adherence to the Governing Body as the only path of truth. Such a mechanism is what makes JW a standout among other religious traditions, which may be more open to historical errors or have a wider range of interpretations. In turn, the need to unconditionally conform to existing knowledge might deter critical engagement with scripture.

Even though the Watch Tower Society recognises that people are imperfect in their interpretation of prophecy, these modifications have had a historical effect on membership recruitment and retention, and times marked by a high level of urgency are also associated with greater proselytism. Critics say that instead of being a sign of humility, these revisions can undermine belief in the exclusivity of such organisations' interpretive authority, since believers must conform to changing doctrines without having to verify them. This tendency is opposed to the JW's depiction of the other religions as always corrupt, and it brings out a possible inconsistency in the story of divine guidance peculiar to their religion.

Enforcement through Shunning: Social and Psychological Ramifications

"But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked from among you" (1 Corinthians 5:11-13, NIV).

Based on this verse, one of the unique mechanisms that preserve the exclusivity of JW is the practice of shunning (since 2024, formally known as removal from the congregation, though formerly referred to as disfellowshipping), which is inflicted on those who are considered unrepentant of egregious offences or out of their own volition. This policy is intended to maintain the purity of the congregation, as presented in passages such as 1 Corinthians 5:11-13, and it consists of avoiding contact, even with non-cohabiting family members, to avoid social ostracism.

As shown by peer-reviewed studies, there are profound long-term effects on former members, including high risks of mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, reduced life satisfaction, and the feeling of loss of control. Ransom et al. (2021) investigated the extent of identity disfellowshipping experienced by former JW members and the effects of post-exit identification. The paper also examined how the nature of exit (forced or voluntary) and prior religious commitment influenced these specific outcomes. They find that all of these adversely affect the lives of these ex-members after they leave.

Qualitative studies emphasise the theme of existential crisis, a sense of incessant distrust (as a result of internal reporting practices), and greater effects experienced by women because of patriarchal factors. Though official sources portray the practice as loving discipline intended to make individuals repent, sociological and psychological examinations characterise it as a high-control practice that may lead to isolation at a high personal cost. According to Luther (2023), the long-term impact of shunning on mental health, job opportunities, and a satisfying life is detrimental. The research provides insights into loneliness, loss of control, and feelings of worthlessness, which are typical after leaving. The culture of informing fellow Jehovah's Witnesses is another issue that causes further distrust and suspicion.

Patriarchal aspects of life in the JW congregations can enhance the effects of shunning, especially on women whose roles are typically defined by domesticity and supportive contexts. Such occasions of ostracism may further increase the sense of worthlessness not only by breaking social contact but also by disconnecting from references of gender validation within the community. Furthermore, internal reporting mechanisms intersect with the practice, helping establish the environment in which mutual surveillance strengthens conformity. This relational dynamic argues for maintaining exclusivity by discouraging deviation. It signals the high price of dissent, while also creating structural fractures in relationships that extend beyond the individual to family systems across generations.

Comparative Analysis: JW Exclusivity within Restorationist Traditions

Knox (2018) discusses the historic conflict between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the government, civic organisations, established churches and the general population. Based on different historical, ideological, and even national backgrounds, Knox states that JWs have, since their origins in the 1870s, played a defining role in the modern world's perception of religious tolerance. The JWs have restorationist roots with other groups such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Latter-day Saints or Mormons), the Seventh-day Adventists and other emerging groups based on the 19th-century American revivalism and disillusionment with mainstream Christianity. The typical characteristics include claims of restoring Christianity, denial of the creeds (e.g., the Trinity), and a focus on biblical literalism. Knox's historical work also illustrates the

value of moving beyond organisational publications and detractor accounts toward academic historiography of the movement (Knox, 2011, 2017).

Nevertheless, the level of JW exclusivity is relatively high: they do not tolerate any ecclesiastical interaction with other faiths, unlike Latter-day Saints, who also include other scriptures in their doctrine and can engage in ecumenical work on certain matters, or Seventh-day Adventists, who attend ecumenical activities on a limited number of issues. This absolutism aligns with restorationist variants of higher demand but differs from groups that place greater emphasis on unity in the baseline. According to comparative scholarship, the exclusivist tendencies fostered by restorationism are eclipsed by centralised authority and enforcement practices inherent in the JW model, which can lead to increased insularity in pluralistic contexts, thereby decreasing adaptability.

The range of restorationist exclusivity implies that JW can take a drastic stance. In parts of the world where certain communities trade off restorationist ideals with practical involvement in the wider community, such as joining interdenominational projects or recognising partial truth in other areas, JW doctrine dictates total isolation. This absolutism transforms restorationism into a reformatory movement, fostering a totalising sense of self in which any external association would be spiritually contaminating. This strengthens internal solidarity but restricts flexibility in responding to cultural changes, which might add to the sense that JW is stiffer than other similar movements driven by the same historical forces.

Psychosocial Effects of Monolithic Identity Development

The psychological stamping of JW exclusivity is carried over into identity formation and post-exit experiences. The worldview that a 2-polar world exists, organisation versus the world of Satan, is often internalised in the followers as it encourages cohesiveness in the group, but also creates risks of identity loss when the doctrines are challenged. The association between membership of exclusive groups and multiple well-being outcomes has been associated with studies which reported grief similar to bereavement, increased susceptibility to mental health problems, and difficulties in social reintegration because of the previous isolation.

Ex-members develop resilience through the formation of new identities and supportive networks. However, long-term consequences such as fear, guilt, and loss of relationships continue to highlight the duality of exclusivity: it is protective on the inside yet may be maladaptive for the individual amid dissonance or departure. These aspects illuminate the biblical fidelity through the lens of JW exclusivity in the context of doctrinal, social, and psychological dynamics, and raise theological and ethical considerations. These overlapping doctrinal-social-psychological interactions depict the multi-layeredness of JW exclusivity, which is biblical faithfulness on the inside and external questioning of the human cost and theology. Future interdisciplinary studies might include longitudinal results or general interfaith comparisons.

Biblical Ecclesiology as a Counter to Jehovah's Witnesses' Exclusivity

The Bible says, "by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). All (regardless of denominations) those who have accepted Christ as their personal saviour are made members of one body of Christ. The New Testament used the Greek word *ekklesia* to refer to individuals who have been called from the World. The English word "Church" is associated with *kuriakon*, which means "dedicated to the Lord." The "Church" can also mean the lives of believers who are the dwelling places of God, a temple of the Lord (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:22; 1 Pet. 2:5).

Scripture also describes the "church" metaphorically. The Church is said to be the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25-32; 2 Cor. 11:2). Christ is depicted as the head of the Church in reference to the relationship between Christ and believers. At times, the term "Church" refers to believers meeting in a particular location (Corinth, Judea, Jerusalem, etc.) and to those scattered in many other places for worship (Acts 9:31; 1 Cor. 1:2).

It is stated in Scripture that there is neither Jew nor gentile, servant nor free, nor male nor female. Still, all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). The Church brings together all believers, irrespective of geographical location or denomination.

This inclusive, universal-based biblical model of ecclesiology is a direct challenge to the exclusivist model of the Jehovah's Witnesses (JW), which is based on the redefinition of church membership as an individual's

personal commitment to Christ, rather than membership in an organisation. As the above discussion shows, JW exclusivity is a result or by-product of a system where leadership assumes a quasi-mediatory role, interpreting scripture in organisational terms, which can bypass traditional hermeneutical protections, including contextual exegesis and cross-textual harmony and result in doctrines that place group loyalty first and group outside faiths as corrupt beyond redemption.

In contrast, the New Testament view of church as a body baptised by a single Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13) and as a body of all believers called out (ekklesia) of the world, irrespective of denominations, focuses on the ease of having a divine presence without human intermediaries; the body of believers is a living temple filled by God (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:22; 1 Peter 2:5), and the body cuts across organisational boundaries. The figurative understanding that the church is the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5: 25-32; 2 Corinthians 11: 2) and that Christ is the only head, as well as the accommodations to local and dispersed congregations (Acts 9:31; 1 Corinthians 1:2) creates further cuts to exclusive positions, with the covenantal technicality that is accessible to all true believers, and with the practical diversity that is provided without insisting on a single entity.

There are specific ethical consequences of JW exclusivity, which can be traced through the prism of the New Testament's unity. The model dangerously elevates, human structures to mediate between the congregation and their faith in Christ, directly undermining the scriptural principle of direct access to grace. This closeness not only obscures the body of Christ but also hampers the communal witness that is the purpose of metaphors such as the bride or the temple. Moreover, the repression of alternative interpretations in the name of loyalty more clearly underscores the practice of spiritual freedom, unlike the New Testament, which permits variety within unity.

The unity in the Christian faith and the abolition of ethnic, social, and gender boundaries in Galatians 3:28 also make believers from different geographies and traditions belong to the Scripture and make JW insularity incompatible with the Biblical vision of a borderless, faith-based community. Academic critiques support this criticism, having pointed out that although the teachings of JW are meant to reclaim an early form of Christianity,

they tend to anchor these efforts on institutional centrism that causes division, and ethically. A question can be raised on how exclusive ideologies can prevent interfaith dialogue and independent theological thinking; the latter not only contradict the New Testament theme of unity, but also leads to inquiry on how undue control may be imposed in a larger Christian context (Peters, 2021).

Altogether, the reviewed scholarship indicates that JW exclusivity is best understood as a multidimensional phenomenon in which historical restorationism, centralised interpretive authority, doctrinal development, social enforcement, and identity formation interact. The contribution of this review is to connect these strands within a single theological critique and to place the organisational claim to exclusive truth in dialogue with both empirical scholarship on former members and the New Testament conception of the church.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The claim to the exclusivity of Jehovah's Witnesses, based on the centralised structure and the restoration of early Christianity, is a complicated mixture of theological belief and the theoretical weaknesses of the doctrinal settlement. As discussed, historical events since the 1870s and practices such as the refinement of doctrines and the avoidance of further consolidation have reinforced a self-centred identity opposed to New Testament ecclesiology, in which the church is portrayed as a unified body that embraces all believers in Christ, irrespective of denomination. This critique points to discrepancies, including failed eschatological promises and psychosocial expenses, which can undercut claims to exclusive truth and make JW more like high-demand restorationist movements than general Christian unity. In conclusion, as JW principles create communal unity and morality among religious followers, they raise ethical issues regarding spiritual isolation, the internalisation of individual hermeneutics, and the drawing of organisational leadership to the next stage of mediation. A moderate view acknowledges the good intentions of the JW teachings being biblically driven, but calls on people to contemplate their deviation from the biblical focal points of oneness (Galatians 3:28) and a direct approach to divine grace.

Recommendations: Future research could further clarify this analysis by conducting empirical studies of interfaith processes or longitudinal analyses of membership dynamics to encourage more dialogue and understanding

across pluralistic religions. Such research should also comparatively examine the perspectives of current members, former members, and scholars of religion, while using transparent and ethically appropriate procedures to reduce one-sided interpretations.

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